International Journal of Scientific Research & Engineering Trends
Volume 12, Issue 6, Nov-Dec-2026, ISSN (Online): 2395-566X

Situated Information Needs Within Community Realities: An Ethnographic Study of Rural and Peri-Urban Communities in Eastern Uganda

Okello Gilbert[1], Joyce Bukirwa[2], Elisam Magara[3] David Luyombya[4] Clement Lutaaya[5] Oliver Muhirwe[6]
[1,2,3,4,6]Makerere University,
[5]Gulu University

Abstract- Access to relevant information helps people make decisions, address everyday challenges and participate in social and economic life. In rural and peri-urban communities, understanding Information Needs requires attention to the different livelihoods, family responsibilities, cultural knowledge, social relationships and institutional services through which people experience daily life. Although Information Science recognises the importance of context, studies organised around particular occupations or services offer a more limited account of how Information Needs arise across these connected areas of community life. This study examined community Information Needs in Nagongera Subcounty, Tororo District, within Bukedi Subregion, Eastern Uganda. An interpretive-constructivist ethnographic inquiry centred on rural Opadamwara and peri-urban Mahanga, drawing on 19 individual interviews, two focus group discussions, observation and documentary review. Data were analysed using constructivist grounded-theory procedures. The study identified six Information-Need Domains: Cultural Continuity, Family Wellbeing, Livelihoods, Education, Health and Governance. Within the domains, participants faced distinct questions about what they needed to know, understand, clarify, interpret or verify. These questions arose in situations shaped by wider community conditions that were experienced differently by individuals and households. The study distinguishes broad Information-Need Domains from Situated Information Needs arising within Community Realities. This distinction contributes evidence from a Jopadhola rural and peri-urban setting and offers a more precise basis for identifying needs before determining appropriate information-service responses.

Keywords: Access to information; Information Needs; Information-Need Domains; Situated Information Needs; Community Realities; Uganda.

I. INTRODUCTION

Access to relevant information helps people understand the situations they face, make decisions and participate in community life. Information services contribute to this goal when the assistance they provide corresponds to what people need to know or understand. In rural and peri-urban communities, this correspondence can be difficult to establish because livelihoods, family responsibilities, cultural knowledge, social relationships and institutional services are experienced together in daily life. Consequently, understanding community Information Needs is important before determining what information or assistance should be provided.

Information Needs arise when a person encounters a situation requiring knowledge, explanation, clarification, interpretation or verification. Information-behaviour scholarship has long connected these needs with people's activities and circumstances (Taylor, 1991; Savolainen, 1995; Wilson, 1997). This understanding provides a foundation for investigating Information Needs in particular settings. It also highlights an important distinction in community needs assessment: a broad subject such as agriculture, health or education identifies an area of concern, whereas a particular Information Need concerns what someone requires to understand within a specific situation. An educational decision, for instance, may involve subject choice, household resources and employment prospects. Establishing the need therefore involves following the question as the person experiences it.

Studies of Ugandan fishing communities have identified Information Needs involving markets, weather, finance, health and other livelihood matters (Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla, 2003; Endra et al., 2025). These investigations provide valuable accounts of needs linked to particular activities. Community life, however, involves concerns across several occupations and responsibilities. Research that begins from one occupation or service programme can explain its particular informational conditions in depth; a community-wide inquiry can complement that work by showing how needs arise within and across areas of everyday life. Research on Indigenous information literacy also draws attention to relationships and responsibilities that can affect the meaning of knowledge and whose guidance is appropriate (Littletree et al., 2023).

© 2026 IJSRET

Bukedi Subregion in Eastern Uganda provides a relevant setting for investigating these relationships. The subregion comprises Budaka, Busia, Butaleja, Butebo, Kibuku, Pallisa and Tororo districts. Its communities engage in agriculture, trading and other livelihood activities while participating in education, health and government services and drawing upon interpersonal and cultural knowledge relationships. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2025), 49.9% of Bukedi households were engaged in the subsistence economy, and 69.1% of its population experienced moderate or severe food insecurity. Radio, word of mouth and telephone communication were also reported among important information channels. These indicators describe conditions in the wider subregion; they provide background for examining how particular people encounter information concerns.

Within Bukedi, the study concentrated on Nagongera Subcounty in Tororo District, particularly rural Opadamwara and peri-urban Mahanga. These settings lie within a predominantly Jopadhola cultural and linguistic environment where cultural knowledge and recognised family or clan responsibilities coexist with schools, markets, health facilities, government programmes and communication technologies. Owor (2012) documented Jopadhola clan institutions, while Jagire (2016) examined ancestral and spiritual naming and associated knowledge. Their work helps establish the cultural and relational environment in which some concerns arise. The different institutions and relationships present in Nagongera make it possible to investigate Information Needs across several connected areas of community life.

Against this background, an integrated empirical account is needed of how community members' particular Information Needs arise from situations experienced within these wider conditions. The study addressed one overarching question: *How do Information Needs arise and take shape within the everyday circumstances of community members in Nagongera Subcounty?*

The inquiry examined the areas of community life in which needs emerged, the particular questions participants sought to resolve, and the community and personal circumstances shaping those questions. This provides a basis for understanding needs in the study setting and considering their significance for relevant information-service provision.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Understanding people's Information Needs has remained a central concern in Information Science because the relevance of information and information services depends partly on their relationship with the circumstances in which people require assistance. Information-needs research has consequently examined the subjects about which people seek information, the situations giving rise to these needs and the conditions influencing how information is sought and used. Categorising Information Needs according to subjects such as health, education, agriculture or employment can reveal common concerns and support information-service planning. However, identifying a subject does not necessarily establish what a person needs to know, understand or clarify within a particular situation. For example, a concern classified under agriculture may involve decisions about planting, land use, changing seasonal conditions or markets. These represent different Information Needs arising within the same broad area of community life (Case & Given, 2016; Taylor, 1991).

The importance of understanding Information Needs in relation to people's circumstances has long been recognised in information-behaviour scholarship. Taylor (1991), through his Information Use Environment approach, emphasised relationships among people, their problems, settings and the purposes for which information becomes useful. His contribution redirected attention from information resources alone towards the circumstances in which information could assist people in addressing particular problems. Savolainen (1995) extended this understanding through his study of everyday life information seeking among teachers and industrial workers. His findings demonstrated that information seeking was associated with socially organised ways of life, everyday activities and the resources available to people. Although developed within a particular social and occupational setting, the study established the importance of examining information needs beyond formal information systems and their immediate users.

Wilson (1997, 1999) further developed a contextual understanding of information behaviour by recognising the influence of personal, psychological, interpersonal, role-related and environmental conditions. His work demonstrated that the circumstances surrounding an individual can influence the experience of an information need and the possibilities for responding to it. Taken together, these perspectives provide a strong foundation for understanding Information Needs as situated within people's lives rather than as demands for information existing independently of circumstances. However, their general applicability does not establish which conditions become significant in particular communities or how these conditions shape the specific questions that people encounter. Such relationships require empirical investigation within the settings concerned.

More recent scholarship has extended attention to how knowledge and information are understood within different social and cultural environments. Littletree et al. (2023), drawing on the experiences of Indigenous librarians in the United States, Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand,

© 2026 IJSRET

conceptualised Indigenous information literacy through relationality, reciprocity and respect. Their findings demonstrate that engagement with information may involve responsibilities towards people, knowledge and relationships rather than simply the acquisition of factual content. This perspective is relevant to Information Needs because some questions cannot be fully understood without considering the relationships through which knowledge is held, explained and communicated. This account extends the present inquiry by making relationships and responsibilities relevant to the understanding of particular Information Needs, including who can provide an appropriate explanation.

African empirical research brings these considerations into settings where Information Needs arise alongside livelihood activities, household responsibilities, social relationships and uneven access to information resources. Mwantimwa (2020), investigating livelihood information and knowledge needs, access and exchange among rural communities in Tanzania's Bunda District, demonstrated the significance of information and knowledge for rural economic activities. The study examined not only the information required for livelihoods but also the circumstances surrounding its accessibility and exchange. Its contribution is important because it connects Information Needs with the everyday activities and communication arrangements through which rural communities pursue their livelihoods. Its focus on livelihoods provides a useful point of comparison for examining needs arising across other areas of community life, including family responsibilities, cultural continuity, health and governance.

Research in South Africa provides further evidence of the difficulties involved in responding to community Information Needs. Boloka and Ngoepe (2026) investigated information access and repackaging for rural communities with limited public-library provision. Their work demonstrates the importance of understanding the information sources, access conditions and communication arrangements available to rural residents. It also highlights the limitations of relying on information provision that does not adequately consider the circumstances of intended users. The study contributes to understanding the relationship between rural Information Needs and accessible provision, particularly where conventional information infrastructure is limited. Its emphasis on information access and repackaging helps clarify why understanding an experienced need matters before identifying the information response.

These African studies show that community Information Needs cannot be adequately separated from livelihoods, communication conditions, available resources and the circumstances of rural life. They also demonstrate that the availability of information sources does not necessarily establish whether the information provided corresponds to what community members require. However, much of the empirical attention remains directed towards particular livelihoods, information sources or service arrangements. Such approaches are valuable for understanding specific activities and access conditions, but they leave room for complementary investigations that begin with everyday community situations and establish the Information Needs arising within and across them.

Ugandan scholarship provides more direct evidence of these relationships within the national context. Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla (2003) investigated the Information Needs and information-seeking behaviour of artisan fisherfolk and fisheries extension agents in Uganda. Their study demonstrated that Information Needs were closely associated with practical fishing and livelihood activities and identified limitations in the responsiveness of conventional information institutions. The findings connect Information Needs with the activities and decisions for which information is needed. For example, the identification of market information as an area of concern does not necessarily establish whether a person requires information about prices, buyers, transport costs or the timing of a transaction.

More recently, Endra et al. (2025) examined Information Needs and sources among fishing communities around Lake Victoria. Their study identified concerns involving weather, fish stocks, markets, sustainable fishing practices, finance, regulations, health, safety and other livelihood matters. These findings demonstrate that Information Needs associated with a single livelihood can extend across several subjects and responsibilities. They also show that occupational activities cannot always be understood independently of the wider circumstances affecting people's decisions. Nevertheless, identifying these subjects does not necessarily establish the particular Information Need arising within an experienced situation. Weather information, for instance, may be needed to determine whether fishing is safe, when to undertake an activity or how a decision may affect anticipated income. The broad subject remains the same, but the particular question differs according to the circumstances.

Ugandan research has also demonstrated the value of community involvement in determining information-service priorities. Lipeikaite et al. (2022) examined community engagement in assessing needs for digital-literacy training delivered through public and community libraries. Their study involved library stakeholders and community members in establishing the expectations and preferences of women and young people, providing evidence that service programmes can be strengthened when intended beneficiaries participate in determining their needs. This contribution is important because it challenges assumptions that institutions can adequately establish community priorities without engaging the people concerned. The intervention focus offers a useful comparison with

© 2026 IJSRET

ethnographic inquiry that begins with the concerns people experience across community life.

Considered together, these Ugandan studies establish the practical importance of Information Needs and the value of understanding the communities for whom information services are intended. They also illustrate how research organised around particular occupations or interventions can generate detailed knowledge within defined areas while providing a more limited account of Information Needs arising across other community responsibilities and experiences. Everyday community life is not necessarily organised according to the institutional or occupational categories through which information is commonly investigated. A concern involving education may also involve household finances and employment aspirations, while illness may affect livelihoods and caregiving. Likewise, a question concerning land may involve production, inheritance and public administration. Understanding particular Information Needs therefore requires attention to the situations experienced rather than assuming that one broad area fully describes what must be known or clarified.

Within Bukedi Subregion, the concern acquires further significance because community life involves different livelihood activities, institutional arrangements, cultural relationships and forms of knowledge. The predominantly Jopadhola environment of Nagongera includes social and cultural practices through which identity, ancestry, family responsibilities and recognised authority remain relevant to particular matters. Jagire (2016), examining ancestral and spiritual naming among the Jopadhola, documented cultural knowledge and its relationship with identity and inherited responsibilities. Owor (2012), through a study of Jopadhola clan courts, demonstrated the continuing significance of recognised clan institutions in addressing certain community matters. Their work establishes the local significance of relationships and knowledge responsibilities within which particular Information Needs may arise.

These cultural and relational conditions may enter particular Information Needs involving identity, inherited responsibilities, appropriate disclosure or persons recognised as competent to provide an explanation. Other situations may require medical, educational, technical or statutory competence. Consequently, appropriate knowledge and authority should be established in relation to the particular Information Need and the circumstances in which it arises. This consideration reinforces the importance of examining both the broader conditions of community life and their different manifestations in individual situations.

The literature therefore establishes that Information Needs are contextual and that their identification requires attention to people's activities, concerns and circumstances. Foundational information-behaviour scholarship provides the theoretical basis for this understanding, while recent international and African studies demonstrate the significance of relationships, livelihoods, access conditions and information-service arrangements. Ugandan empirical research contributes valuable evidence concerning Information Needs within particular occupations and service programmes, and Jopadhola scholarship establishes the relevance of cultural knowledge and recognised social responsibilities within the study setting. However, these bodies of research provide a less integrated empirical account of how particular Information Needs arise across interconnected areas of everyday community life and how wider community conditions become relevant through the different situations experienced by individuals and households.

The present study addresses this concern through an ethnographic inquiry in Nagongera Subcounty, Bukedi Subregion. It begins with the situations encountered by community members and examines what they needed to know, understand, clarify, interpret or verify in responding to them. In doing so, it investigates the relationship between broad areas of community concern, particular Information Needs and the wider circumstances within which those needs arise. This provides the empirical basis for understanding Situated Information Needs within Community Realities in a rural and peri-urban Jopadhola setting.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative approach guided by an interpretive-constructivist paradigm and employed an ethnographic research design. Ethnography was considered appropriate because it enabled the investigation of information needs within the everyday circumstances in which community members experienced them, rather than beginning with predetermined information-service categories. The approach allowed participants to describe their concerns, experiences and Information Needs in their own terms while enabling the researcher to examine these accounts within their social and cultural settings. Constructivist grounded-theory procedures were used to analyse the data and develop categories from the evidence generated during fieldwork (Charmaz, 2014; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

The research was conducted in Nagongera Subcounty, Tororo District, within Bukedi Subregion in Eastern Uganda. Intensive ethnographic engagement centred on Opadamwara and Mahanga, with follow-up visits to other relevant locations within the subcounty as questions emerged during the inquiry. The field setting included households, farming and trading activities, educational and public-service environments, community interactions and cultural activities. Nagongera is situated within a predominantly Jopadhola

© 2026 IJSRET

cultural and linguistic environment, where Dhopadhola is widely used in everyday communication. The setting provided opportunities to investigate information needs across different aspects of community life. Its selection was intended to support intensive contextual inquiry rather than statistical representation of all communities in Bukedi Subregion.

The study involved 19 individual interview participants, comprising eight information-service providers, three local community leaders and eight community members. Two focus group discussions were also conducted, each involving six additional community members who had not participated in the individual interviews. Information-service providers and community leaders were purposively selected because of their relevant responsibilities and experience, while community members were recruited mainly through referrals and local contacts. Participant selection and follow-up developed progressively as emerging analytical questions indicated the need for further clarification or additional perspectives. Recruitment was therefore guided by the relevance of participants' experiences to the developing inquiry rather than by statistical sampling requirements.

Fieldwork was conducted between January and June 2026. Data were generated through semi-structured in-depth interviews, two focus group discussions, participant observation and documentary review. The wider inquiry reviewed 67 documentary materials, which provided historical, institutional and contextual evidence for interpreting field experiences. Interviews and focus group discussions explored participants' everyday concerns, situations in which information or guidance was needed, where they sought assistance and what remained unclear or unresolved. Participant observation provided opportunities to examine these concerns within household, livelihood, trading, service and community settings. Interviews and other field engagements were conducted in Dhopadhola or English as appropriate, with translation and interpretation supported by persons knowledgeable in the local language and cultural context.

During data generation, participants were encouraged to move beyond describing general difficulties towards explaining what they needed to know, understand, clarify or verify in order to respond to particular situations. For example, a concern involving farming, education or health was explored further to establish the Information Need arising from it. This approach helped distinguish information needs from broader material, social or service-related problems without separating those needs from the circumstances in which they occurred.

Data analysis followed constructivist grounded-theory procedures involving initial coding, focused coding, constant comparison, memo writing and category development, supported by MAXQDA 24 (Charmaz, 2014). The analysis began by examining participants' accounts and field evidence for situations involving informational uncertainty, required explanations, decisions and responsibilities. Through comparison across participants, methods and settings, related concerns were organised into six broad areas of information need. Further comparison examined differences between the situation experienced, the particular Information Need and the circumstances influencing that requirement. Subsequent theoretical integration informed the understanding of Situated Information Needs within Community Realities. These concepts were developed through interpretation of the empirical findings rather than imposed as predetermined categories during data collection.

Trustworthiness was addressed through sustained and repeated field engagement, comparison of evidence from different methods, follow-up of emerging questions and attention to accounts that differed from developing interpretations. Recordings, transcripts, field notes, coding records and analytical memos provided an audit trail supporting dependability and confirmability. Detailed description of the field setting and participants' circumstances was used to support readers in assessing the transferability of the findings to comparable contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The researcher's familiarity with Dhopadhola and Jopadhola community life facilitated communication and field access but also required reflexive attention to assumed meanings. Participant explanations, follow-up questioning and comparison across evidence were used to strengthen the credibility of interpretations.

Ethical approval was obtained from The AIDS Support Organization Research Ethics Committee (TASO REC), together with relevant institutional, local and cultural permissions. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained through procedures appropriate to the participants and approved research protocol.

Separate permission was sought for audio recording. Participant identities were protected through the use of role-based descriptions and the removal of unnecessary identifying information. The inquiry also respected restrictions governing access to, recording and disclosure of culturally sensitive knowledge, including the authority of recognised custodians to determine appropriate conditions of engagement.

1. Findings

1. Across interviews, focus groups and field encounters, community members described situations involving cultural identity, family life, livelihoods, education, health and public administration. Analysis of these accounts identified six broad Information-Need Domains: Cultural Continuity, Family Wellbeing, Livelihoods, Education, Health and

© 2026 IJSRET

Governance. The accounts that follow show what participants needed to know, understand, clarify, interpret or verify as they dealt with particular situations.

2. Cultural Continuity

Cultural-continuity Information Needs emerged when participants recognised aspects of their identity or inherited knowledge but wanted to understand their meaning. In Opadamwara, a young community member identified herself as Pagoya yet could not explain the corresponding clan totem. She sought help from an older woman and, describing why the knowledge was unfamiliar to her, said that "they have not explained these things to me" (Community Member, interview). Her question concerned the meaning of her clan identity and whom she could approach for an explanation.

The Elder and Head of Households recalled learning from older people in homes and around fireplaces. He observed that these occasions had become less common. In another encounter, a young participant recognised a written passage as Dhopadhola but said she could not read it. Together, the accounts brought forward Information Needs about ancestry, identity, language and cultural responsibilities, including how to obtain explanations from people familiar with the relevant knowledge.

3. Family Wellbeing

Participants spoke about Information Needs arising from responsibilities towards children, spouses and other relatives. An elderly woman described the importance of understanding how to guide children and grandchildren as they grew up. A young clothes trader explained that she had approached her husband's father about difficulties in her marriage but remained uncertain about what she could appropriately share outside the household. She wanted guidance on whom to approach, what could safely be disclosed and how the matter might be addressed. The circumstances in which sensitive concerns were discussed also mattered. During an interview about unwanted pregnancy and dependence on men, a young woman became uncomfortable as people she knew passed the interview location. She eventually asked for the recording to stop. Her response showed the importance of privacy to her ability to discuss the concern. Across these accounts, the Information Needs involved parenting, relationships, care, protection, confidentiality and appropriate help-seeking.

4. Livelihoods

Livelihood Information Needs arose as participants considered farming, trading, employment and the use of available resources. An elderly woman described the difficulty of farming under changing seasonal conditions while also recognising that she had land she wanted to use. She asked, "The seasons have changed and farming is hard. But I also have land ... how can I utilize this resource productively?" (Elderly Woman, interview). She wanted guidance on using the resource she possessed in the conditions she faced.

A clothes trader described questions about capital, stock, pricing and profit as she developed her business. Younger participants raised questions about employment opportunities and ways of entering work. Their accounts located Information Needs in decisions about production, business, finance, skills and resource use, with the particular question varying according to the person's activity and circumstances.

5. Education

Educational Information Needs became especially clear when participants described decisions about continuing their studies or preparing for work. A young person who had completed Senior Four wanted to continue learning but was uncertain which subject combination would support future employment. Explaining his concern about making a useful educational choice, he said, "I don't want to just go to school for nothing" (Youth, interview). He wanted to understand how a subject choice could relate to further study and possible work.

Other participants described education interrupted by financial and family circumstances. Their questions concerned whether they could return to school, pursue vocational training or develop skills through another pathway. The accounts showed Information Needs associated with educational progression, interrupted study and transitions towards employment.

6. Health

Health Information Needs emerged in discussions about prevention, nutrition, illness, treatment and movement between health providers. A Village Health Team participant described household guidance involving child nutrition, malnutrition, older people and home-based health education. These concerns included understanding preventive practices and recognising when further care was needed.

A participant with a disability described repeated investigations, surgery and referrals among health institutions without a clear resolution of her condition. Her account raised questions about what earlier investigations meant, which options remained, who was responsible for follow-up and where she should seek further help. The continuing health situation therefore involved needs for explanation and guidance at different stages of care.

7. Governance

Governance Information Needs appeared when participants described public programmes and administrative processes whose outcomes or procedures they could not verify. During

© 2026 IJSRET

the Mahanga focus group discussion, a participant with visual impairment said that she expected a government payment for persons with disabilities. Since she did not own a telephone, she had provided another person's number to receive the notification. She remained uncertain whether the payment had been made and worried about being held accountable for a transaction she could not verify. She needed confirmation of the payment's status, evidence of the transaction and clarification about the responsible person or office.

Other participants raised questions about compensation, public programmes and the authorities responsible for particular matters. These accounts identified Information Needs concerning eligibility, rights, documentation, verification, accountability and procedures for seeking clarification.

Across the six domains, participants' accounts showed that a common area of concern could contain different Information Needs. The farmer's question about land use differed from the trader's questions about pricing and profit, while the learner's educational choices differed from those of people whose schooling had been interrupted. Particular circumstances—including disability, literacy, family relationships, cultural responsibilities and access to communication—shaped what participants needed to understand. Some concerns also connected more than one domain, especially where education related to employment, health to caregiving or land to family responsibilities. These patterns provide the empirical basis for the discussion that follows.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings establish a distinction between the six Information-Need Domains and the particular Information Needs experienced within them. The domains identify areas of community concern, whereas participants' accounts show the specific understanding required in a particular situation. Within Livelihoods, the elderly woman sought guidance on using her land productively under changing seasonal conditions, while a trader needed to understand capital, stock and pricing. Within Education, a Senior Four completer wanted to understand the relationship between subject choice and future employment. Consequently, the domain provided a useful starting point, and the experienced situation established the particular Information Need. This distinction gives community needs assessment a clearer focus on the question the person is trying to resolve.

Recent Ugandan research supports the practical orientation of these findings. Endra et al. (2025) identified needs associated with weather, markets, finance, regulation, health and other aspects of fishing livelihoods, extending earlier evidence from Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla (2003). These studies show that even a single livelihood can involve several areas of information. The Nagongera findings add a view across six areas of community life and demonstrate variation among needs placed in the same domain. Taylor's (1991) Information Use Environment provides a theoretical explanation for this finding by relating the usefulness of information to people, their problems and their settings. Therefore, needs assessment can use domains to organise broad priorities while investigating the particular Information Need within each situation.

The findings also show that particular Information Needs arose within wider community conditions that people experienced differently. One young participant recognised a written passage as Dhopadhola but could not read it. Another participant, who had visual impairment and no telephone, depended on someone else's number for communication about a public payment and needed to verify what had happened. These experiences connected community-level language and communication arrangements with individual literacy, disability and access conditions. The study uses Community Realities to describe the wider cultural, linguistic, social, relational, material, institutional and knowledge-related conditions, together with their different manifestations in individual and household circumstances. Thus, understanding the need involves examining how community conditions enter the particular situation.

This interpretation is supported by Wilson's (1997, 1999) account of personal, interpersonal and environmental influences on information behaviour and Savolainen's (1995) explanation of information seeking within everyday life. Recent African studies help locate these relationships within rural information environments. Mwantimwa (2020) connected livelihood information and knowledge needs with access and exchange in rural Tanzania, while Boloka and Ngoepe (2026) examined information access and repackaging in South African rural communities. Together, these studies show why community conditions matter to information practices.

The Nagongera evidence extends the discussion to the precise question arising for a particular person under those conditions. Consequently, Community Realities connects the wider setting with the individual situation when identifying a Situated Information Need.

Some Information Needs also arose through relationships and recognised responsibilities. The participant who identified as Pagoya sought clarification about her clan totem from an older woman, while the clothes trader facing marital difficulties considered whom she could approach and what she could disclose. In both accounts, the particular need involved an explanation and the relationship through which that explanation could appropriately be sought. Jagire (2016) and Owor (2012) establish the significance of cultural

© 2026 IJSRET

knowledge and recognised responsibilities within aspects of Jopadhola life. Littletree et al. (2023) similarly show the importance of relationality, reciprocity and respect in Indigenous engagement with information. These perspectives support attending to relationships as part of some needs, and the Nagongera findings show how that relevance becomes specific in a person's situation.

Appropriate knowledge and authority also varied according to the need being experienced. Questions about a clan totem could involve a knowledgeable elder, while uncertainty about medical investigations involved health professionals and questions about a government payment involved responsible administrative authorities. The evidence therefore places the person's specific question at the centre of deciding which knowledge or competence is relevant. For the study's wider concern with responsive provision, this finding suggests that a needs assessment should identify the knowledge relationship appropriate to the need before determining who should provide assistance.

The findings further show that Information Needs were frequently directed towards decisions and possible action. The elderly woman considered how to use land, the learner weighed educational options, and the person expecting a public payment wanted to verify its status before proceeding. Taylor's (1991) account of information use helps explain why an answer is valuable in relation to the decision or problem it supports.

At the same time, the situations clarify the distinction between the Information Need and the wider material or professional need: guidance about land use supports a decision about farming, while medical explanation and administrative verification support decisions involving care or entitlements. Consequently, the contribution of information services lies in providing the explanation, verification or guidance relevant to the person's next step, alongside other assistance that may be required.

Several concerns also connected more than one domain. Educational decisions involved household resources and employment aspirations, health questions extended into family responsibilities and livelihoods, and land concerns could include productive use and inheritance. Endra et al. (2025) likewise identified multiple subjects linked to a single livelihood, while Taylor (1991) located information use within the problems and settings that give it meaning. The Nagongera findings extend this understanding to situations spanning different areas of community life. Therefore, needs assessment should follow the concern across domains where the person's situation requires it, while retaining the six domains as useful analytical groupings.

Consequently, the findings answer the study's question by showing where Information Needs arose, what community members needed to understand within their particular situations, and how wider conditions shaped those needs. Situated Information Needs refers to these particular needs as experienced within Community Realities; the Information-Need Domains identify their broad areas of occurrence. This study-grounded distinction contributes to community Information Needs research by making the relationship between domains, situations and conditions explicit. For information-service provision, the implication is to begin with people's experienced concerns, establish their particular needs and then determine the information, explanation and appropriate competence required to respond.

V. CONCLUSION

Understanding community Information Needs is essential to providing information relevant to people's decisions, responsibilities and everyday challenges. In Nagongera, the study identified six Information-Need Domains—Cultural Continuity, Family Wellbeing, Livelihoods, Education, Health and Governance—within which community members experienced different questions and uncertainties. Their particular Information Needs arose through situations shaped by community conditions that varied in significance across individuals and households. The findings therefore establish that identifying broad domains and understanding the particular needs within them are connected but distinct tasks.

The study contributes an empirically grounded distinction between Information-Need Domains and Situated Information Needs arising within Community Realities. This distinction explains why community needs assessment should begin with the experienced situation, clarify what needs to be known, understood, interpreted or verified, and consider the community and personal conditions shaping that need before choosing an information-service response. It provides a basis for more relevant provision, while the actual effects on access and service responsiveness remain matters for further evaluation. Comparative research in other communities can examine how useful this distinction is across different cultural, rural, urban and institutional settings.

REFERENCES

1. Boloka, M., & Ngoepe, M. (2026). Leaving no one behind: Information (re)packaging for rural dwellers in South Africa. Information Development, 42(2), 588–600. https://doi.org/10.1177/02666669241227877
2. Case, D. O., & Given, L. M. (2016). Looking for information: A survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior (4th ed.). Emerald Group Publishing.
3. Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing grounded theory (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

© 2026 IJSRET

4. Endra, A., Kaddu, S., Bukirwa, J., & Bassa, S. (2025). Assessing the information needs and sources for sustainable livelihoods in the fisher communities of Lake Victoria, Uganda. East African Journal of Information Technology, 8(1), 102–120. https://doi.org/10.37284/eajit.8.1.3017
5. Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2019). Ethnography: Principles in practice (4th ed.). Routledge.
6. Ikoja-Odongo, R., & Ocholla, D. N. (2003). Information needs and information-seeking behavior of artisan fisher folk of Uganda. Library & Information Science Research, 25(1), 89–105. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0740-8188(02)00167-6
7. Jagire, J. M. Y. (2016). Ancestral and spiritual naming of children among the Jopadhola Lwo of Eastern Uganda [Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto]. TSpace. https://utoronto.scholaris.ca/items/94cee647-73e6-4fd2-b99b-c5f71bbb9dbd
8. Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. SAGE Publications.
9. Lipeikaite, U., Amanyabyoona, R., Kamukama, A., & Katungisa, A. (2022). Community engagement for meaningful and sustainable digital literacy training in Uganda. Journal of Library Outreach and Engagement, 2(1), 30–39. https://doi.org/10.21900/j.jloe.v2i1.875
10. Littletree, S., Andrews, N., & Loyer, J. (2023). Information as a relation: Defining Indigenous information literacy. Journal of Information Literacy, 17(2), 4–23. https://doi.org/10.11645/17.2.8
11. Mwantimwa, K. (2020). Livelihood information and knowledge needs, access, and exchange in rural communities in the Bunda District, Tanzania. Rural Society, 29(1), 30–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/10371656.2020.1744271
12. Owor, M. (2012). Creating an independent traditional court: A study of Jopadhola clan courts in Uganda. Journal of African Law, 56(2), 215–242. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855312000095
13. Savolainen, R. (1995). Everyday life information seeking: Approaching information seeking in the context of "way of life." Library & Information Science Research, 17(3), 259–294. https://doi.org/10.1016/0740-8188(95)90048-9
14. Taylor, R. S. (1991). Information use environments. In B. Dervin & M. J. Voigt (Eds.), Progress in communication sciences (Vol. 10, pp. 217–255). Ablex.
15. Uganda Bureau of Statistics. (2025). National population and housing census 2024: Bukedi subregion profile.
16. Wilson, T. D. (1997). Information behaviour: An interdisciplinary perspective. Information Processing & Management, 33(4), 551–572. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-4573(97)00028-9
17. Wilson, T. D. (1999). Models in information behaviour research. Journal of Documentation, 55(3), 249–270. https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000007145

© 2026 IJSRET